

Topics of Interest

Board Retreat
1.29.2021



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Mental Health & Public Safety



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Public Health





1.

Submitted by: Commissioner Altman

Topic: I'd like the County to take up new initiatives for increased access to primary care through Public Health or our community partners to address diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, and women's access reproductive health care.

Response: Mecklenburg County Public Health does not provide primary healthcare services but works closely with community healthcare providers to improve access to care. The department does provide reproductive health care through our clinics, as well as screenings for diabetes, high blood pressure, and obesity for residents accessing services within clinics. A detailed list of the services provided by Public Health is included in the written response. The Board could consider expanding these services pending available resources.

See written response for additional details.

Black Maternal Health & Infant Mortality Rate



2.

Submitted by: Commissioner Meier

Topic:

I want to see us address Black maternal health and the Black infant mortality rate. I like the idea of mobile health units, which could include mental health. As transportation is so often an issue for low-income families, bring the healthcare to them.

Response: The Public Health response to racial and ethnic disparities related to maternal and child health will include improved access and analysis of data to better determine the specific issues related to maternal health and infant mortality in Mecklenburg County and the needed approaches to address those issues, a coordinated approach to care coordination through community health workers in the communities needing the service and contracts through community based organizations that can implement the best practices that will address these needs of these populations. The improved data will assist in the determination of access to care issues and the best approaches to address those issues.

Regarding transportation, Mecklenburg Transportation services through DSS can provide transportation to and from medical appointments for low-income families and adults who are Medicaid eligible.



3.

Submitted by: Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell

Topic:

- a. Low-income residents in the Pineville area have difficulty accessing free health services. Pineville could use a similar type of facility to the free clinic in Matthews. Can the county help to facilitate a free clinic route by partnering with Atrium or Novant?
- b. Discuss feasibility of a Mobile Health Unit with CRC and Public Health capabilities that could reach residents in outlying areas of the county?

Response: Access to care has consistently been a priority in the Community Health Assessments completed by the Department with the community. We work with partners, including our healthcare systems, our federally qualified health care systems, our community healthcare providers and other community-based organizations to assess where care is most needed and to develop priorities and approaches for addressing those needs. Mecklenburg County Public Health does not provide primary care and we believe our role continues to be one of convening and facilitating on this issue.



4.

Submitted by: Commissioner Cotham

Topic: What is the cost for an internal consulting group within the Health Department in comparison to prior years?

Response: Following the issues experienced by the Department in 2017, several outside consulting groups were engaged to assess the Department and to develop recommendations for improvement in service delivery and access to services. These consultant groups included entities focused on clinical services, organizational development, implementation of the LabCorp contract, the development of the proposal for the NC Healthy Opportunities Pilot, and other initiatives.

See written response for additional details.

Mental Health & Public Safety





5.

Submitted by: Commissioners Rodriguez-McDowell & Powell

Topic:

- a. Please examine what resources would be required to provide more Crisis Intervention Training for CMPD and perhaps MCSO.
- b. What needs can be met at the local level through a “Walk-in Crisis Center” for Mental Health emergencies that helps folks in emergent situations and transitions them to long term solutions.
- c. What budget implications are going to need to be met in order for the violence interruption program to be effective? What percentage of these efforts are being funded by City and by County dollars?

Response: The schedule for a CIT single class includes 18 blocks of instruction, 4 site visits, 4 role plays, consumer/ family panel, pre-tests & post-tests. Challenges faced by the CIT program related to further expansion involves the extensiveness of the training and the number of individuals and organizations that are involved in delivering each and every class.

There is not currently a facility providing ‘walk-in’ services for mental health emergencies. This type of facility may be included in a long-term comprehensive strategy, but significant research and collaboration would be required to make sure an effort successful.

The Cure Violence model implemented by the Office of Violence Prevention costs \$500K annually, split 50/50 between the County & City.

See written response for additional details.



6.

Submitted by: Commissioner Altman

Topic: I'd like the County to take up new initiatives for safe storage of firearms (public education campaigns and gun locks/boxes distribution with involvement from local industry, the sheriff, and community leaders).

Response: Both Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD) and Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) conduct safe storage programs. The Board could consider expanding programs such as these through the MCSO pending available resources.

Currently, County dollars are not used to purchase safes or locks. A low-cost lock is approximately \$2, while a low-cost plastic gun box can be purchased as low as \$20. However, prices can be in the thousands depending on the quality. These devices are only effective if used properly by a responsible gun owner. Under current pandemic restrictions, direct distribution would be challenging.

See written response for additional details.



7.

Submitted by:

Commissioners Rodriguez-McDowell & Powell

Topic:

- a. Please provide an update on where we stand with funding for this. (Has it been affected by COVID?)
- b. Can we get an update on the timeline?

Response: Planning for the Family Justice Center is well under way but has been affected some by COVID-19. The first phase Survivor Resource Center will be operational in January 2021.

A building committee has been created and a 501(c)3 organization has been established to manage a capital campaign for the facility, with a goal to raise \$35M.

The facility has been named 'The Umbrella Center' and a branding guide established for future marketing & informational materials.

The timeline has groundbreaking in July 2022, and partners moving in in October 2023. This timeline depends on the success of the capital campaign.

See written response for additional details.

A person wearing a blue denim shirt and a red and yellow safety vest is shown from the chest down. They are holding a blue hard hat with both hands. The background is a dark, textured surface.

Economic Development & Workforce Development



8.

Submitted by: Commissioner Altman

Topic: My chief topic of interest is developing a new plan for the County to lead on workforce development.

Response:

Information will be provided for discussion during the Board Retreat.



9.

Submitted by: Commissioner Powell

Topic: Review county funding dedicated to economic development for small businesses (less than 100 employees) vs. businesses with more than 100 employees.

Response: The FY2021 budget for the Office of Economic Development dedicated to small business support can be delineated into the 'buckets' below:

Direct Small Business Support – \$488K
Business Attraction & Retention – \$247K
Business Investment Grants – \$3.3M

See written response for additional details.



10.

Submitted by: Commissioner Jerrell

Topic: MWSBE Small Business Grants - With over 40% of minority owned businesses closed due to the pandemic, it has become clear that support for our minority owned businesses is severely lacking. Access to loans was a major step taken by the County but grants and forgivable loans should also be included in our efforts to support this segment of our population. It is imperative that we expand our programming to include these elements to qualifying and existing businesses to support out MWSBE goals.

Response: The North Carolina Constitution does not allow for direct grants or forgivable loans to any business or private party.

The Office of Economic Development will be presenting the recommendations from the MWSBE Disparity Study at the Board Retreat and launching the Mecklenburg County Business Launchpad Program in mid-2021. These will significantly improve the County's engagement with MWSBE businesses and create a new tool to assist these entrepreneurs and contribute to their success.

The Board could also consider also other innovative approaches which are outlined in the response document.



11.

Submitted by: Commissioner Jerrell

Topic: Immigrant and Refugee Business Support - I would like to see specific programming which is able to support our immigrant and refugee businesses. This population has been under-represented and the severe impact of COVID-19 on these communities have been grossly under-reported. What programming can be developed to provide financial assistance to these communities, most of which will not qualify through traditional means?

Response: The North Carolina Constitution does not allow for direct grants or forgivable loans to any business or private party.

The County may be able to provide financial and other support to non-profit organizations serving immigrant and refugee populations. Partnerships with community based non-profit organizations would ensure linguistic and cultural fluency with immigrants and refugees while leveraging the existing staff and capital resources within the organizations. For example, Prospera North Carolina received \$50,000 in FY2021 as a Mecklenburg County Community Service Grant recipient in order to provide bilingual assistance to Hispanic entrepreneurs.

See written response for additional details.

A silver key and a green house-shaped tag with a heart cutout are placed on a wooden surface. The key is positioned diagonally, and the tag is attached to its ring. The text "Affordable Housing, Eviction, & Homelessness" is overlaid in white on the image.

Affordable Housing, Eviction, & Homelessness



12.

Submitted by: Commissioner Leake

Topic: Would like the Board to allocate funding to the senior home repair program (Elder Response Initiative – Critical Home Repair)

Response: This program has been contacted to begin the process of determining eligibility to do business with the County. The County Manager will keep the Board informed on the status of this work.



13.

Submitted by: Commissioner Leake

Topic: Can the county provide crisis assistance to individuals facing eviction prior to initiation of the eviction process, so that individuals do not wait until they are in court facing eviction to receive support?

Response: Yes. Individuals can apply for assistance at Crisis Assistance Ministry on the first day they are late on rent. This is before the eviction process starts.



14.

Submitted by: Commissioner Jerrell

Topic: Can we consider expanding the current rental subsidy program to include families at 50-60% AMI, rather than only those at 30% and below? Can we also expand to assist with mortgage payments, as well as rent? I'm also interested in a report of how many families we would be able to serve if these expansions were implemented vs. what we are able to serve now.

Response: Presently, Mecklenburg County does not have a direct rental subsidy program to support working families that are housing insecure. As we expand our Affordable Housing Initiatives, we can work to develop a program that will target this population and support families up to 60% AMI.

The development and implementation of such a program would likely require a significant new investment based on the level of need in the community.

See written response for additional details.

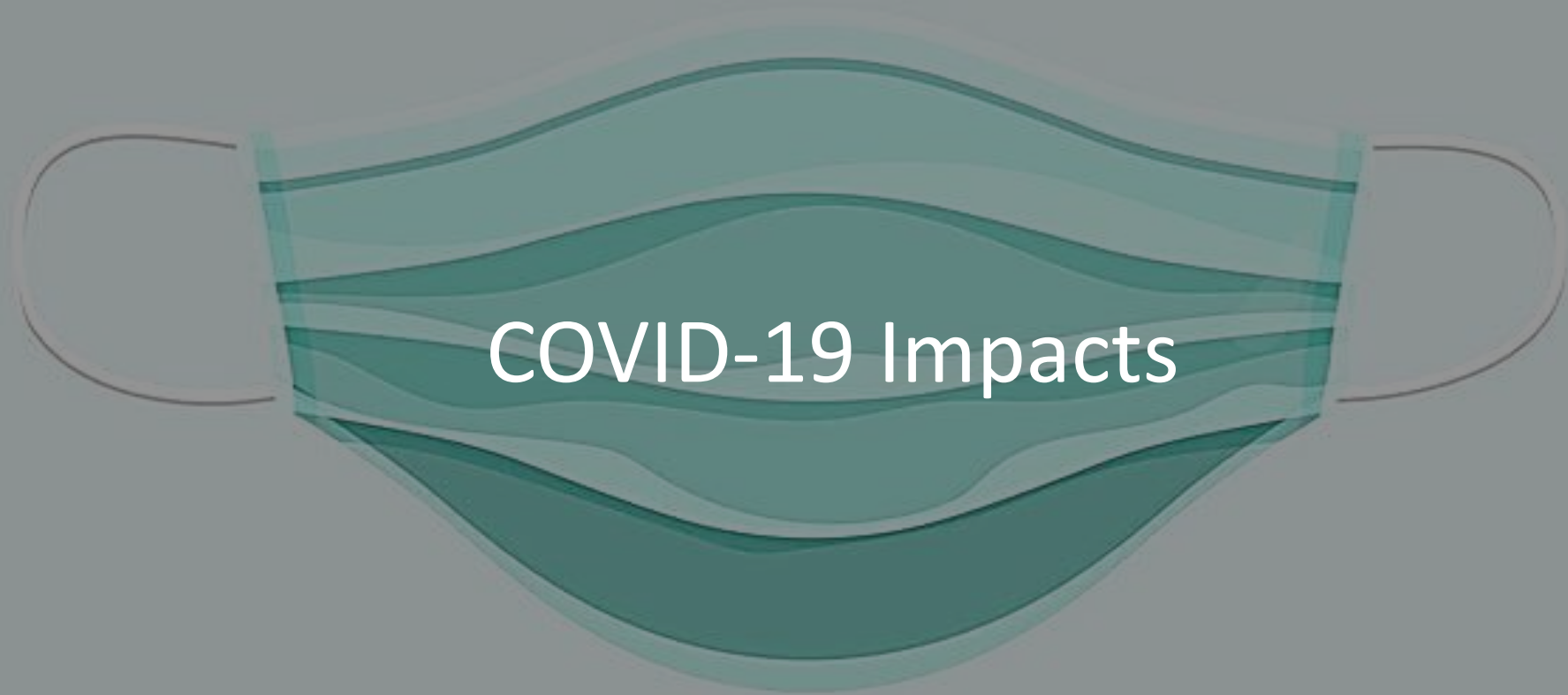


15.

Submitted by: Commissioner Jerrell

Topic: Can we consider implementing a safe parking pilot program for homeless families and review options for an approved site/encampment for the most vulnerable of our homeless population to obtain support?

Response: The Board received a detailed report on the Homeless Encampment from Anthony Trotman at its Public Policy Workshop on December 8th. Among other things, this presentation made clear that there is adequate capacity in our existing shelter network which precludes the need for such a program.



COVID-19 Impacts



16.

Submitted by: Commissioner Powell

Topic: Provide a thorough review of financial outlook with impact of COVID.

Response: County staff will provide a detailed economic & financial outlook at the Board Retreat.



17.

Submitted by: Commissioner Leake

Topic: How are we managing senior centers during the pandemic? What options could we consider to make it easier for our senior residents?

Response:

- Staff are providing “grab and go” lunches for seniors at the Tyvola Senior Center & Bette Rae Thomas Rec Center, with additional sites under development in Steele Creek & Druid Hills.
- Outdoor programming for seniors is provided at the Tyvola and David B. Waymer Centers five days a week
- Home-delivered meals are offered to the participants at each of the three Senior Centers
- Shamrock Senior Center is currently closed due to the move to the new Regional Center
- Weekly wellness calls are made by staff to participants at each of the three senior centers



Land Acquisition & Parks



18.

Submitted by: Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell & Powell

Topic: Explore options for Strategic Land Acquisition for parks, greenways, watershed protection and schools. If the current infrastructure remains the same, AFM needs to add a support position for strategic land acquisition. What are options for a land bond in 2021, while interest rates are so low?

Response:

- Land Bonds have not been approved by the Local Government Commission (LGC) for many years because location, purpose, size, cost, and timing all need to be known upfront before financing is issued
- These requirements make it virtually impossible to successfully issue general purpose land bonds in North Carolina
- If approved by the LGC, the addition of a Land Bond to the CIP would require a revenue source to fund the annual debt payment
- A \$300M land bond is estimated to cost \$426m with interest and is estimated to require a 1.18 cent tax rate increase



19.

Submitted by: Commissioner Powell

Topic: We need to develop creative solutions to fully fund Park Operations which remain understaffed and underfunded when compared to other jurisdictions as reported by the NRPA.

Response: County Staff will provide an overview of the funding for parks and recreation during the retreat. Park operations are funded at \$52 million. Of this funding \$42 million (80%) is from property tax revenue, and \$10M (20%) comes from fees for service. Fees, such as facility rental, partially offset the cost for the services being provided. Therefore, increasing funding for Parks and Recreation requires increasing property tax revenues or decreasing other areas of the budget.



20.

Submitted by: Commissioner Jerrell

Topic:

a. Develop an "equity plan" that outlines how we will implement measures to ensure parks are maintained in an equitable way. We must over-correct in under-served areas/communities in the "crescent" to include re-design, new equipment, and upgrades.

b. I would like to see information, potential options and/or challenges around outsourcing "a portion" of this function to supplement the current need. Note: I am not suggesting we decrease our staff, but outsource to supplement the need.

Response: A presentation will be provided at the Board Retreat that will cover Meck Playbook and will focus specifically on recommendations surrounding equity. The presentation will also provide information on our current staffing for maintenance including options for contracting out a portion of the work and/or adding staff in identified areas.



21.

Submitted by: Commissioner Jerrell

Topic: East Charlotte continues to be one of the fastest growing areas in our community. Residents are extremely appreciative of the Accelerated Greenway plan that was previously approved for access to Reedy Creek Park from Plaza Rd Ext and are excited about the plans for Plott Rd as well. Current development around Harrisburg Rd, Robinson Church Rd, Hood Road, Plott Rd and Plaza Rd Ext have created a major concern around the lack of parks, open space, and other amenities for the new neighborhoods being developed along these corridors.

Response: A plan for enhancements to the East Charlotte community is underway. Staff are conducting a Master Plan for the Harrisburg Road Sportsplex, which will include community engagement in Spring 2021. As part of the evaluation and process improvement recommendations in Meck Playbook, we are building capacity toward increased community engagement around the potential for land acquisition and/or the development of new park facilities both in this area and across the county.

See written document for additional details

Miscellaneous





22.

Submitted by: Commissioner Leake

Topic: Request to invite 2 – 3 executives to meet with the Board and discuss building mini-markets within Food Deserts Communities.

Response: The County Manager has sent requests to grocery store chain executives to request a meeting with the Board of County Commissioners. Representatives from Compare Foods and The North Carolina Retailers Association met with the board at the January 12th public policy workshop.



23.

Submitted by: Commissioner Leake

Topic: Would like to have discussion on education regarding the responsibility of the board of education to ensure that all students are job or college ready.

Response: County Staff will provide information for a discussion on this item at the retreat.

24.

Submitted by: Commissioner Rodriguez McDowell

Topic: Mecklenburg County should lead the way in providing a living wage (or at least \$15 per hour) to hourly paid workers doing the county's business.

- a. Please prepare to discuss the budget implications and what it would take to bring in-house those positions that are currently out-sourced by the county.
- b. Consider a phased approach by department.

Response: An analysis on the estimated expense of insourcing for certain positions & services was completed earlier this year. This preliminary estimate indicates that the cost to insource would be around \$16.3 million annually, excluding the indirect cost that would be incurred to support these positions. The indirect expense impact of insourcing these services would be approximately 20% of the direct costs, which brings the total costs to \$19.6m annually.



25.

Submitted by: Commissioner Powell

Topic: Review need for more code enforcement positions to facilitate engineering judgements.

Response: As of December 17, 2020, the code enforcement job family has a vacancy rate of 18%. This family includes positions such as Inspectors (Trainee – III), Plans Examiners, Code Enforcement Officials and Managers, Code Administrators and Fire Marshalls.

It is Human Resources' standard operating procedure to develop a strategic approach to filling all vacant positions. The sourcing strategy related to Code Enforcement positions involves increasing the visibility of County positions and marketing Mecklenburg County as an employer of choice for code enforcement candidates. To accomplish this goal, HR hosts career fairs, networks with relevant professional and social groups to tap into talent pools, and leverages job posting sites.



26.

Submitted by: Commissioner Powell

Topic: I hear constantly about the need for a Magistrate's office in North Mecklenburg. This is serious. What can we do as a Board?

Response: During the 2019 state legislative session, bill drafting attorneys determined that the County could not constitutionally fund magistrate positions.

The Board can continue to advocate for solutions from the State through the Board's legislative agenda.

27.

Submitted by: Commissioner Powell

Topic: Review funding that will be needed when the Mountain Island Marine Commission is re-established.

Response: Legislation introduced in 2019 to reinstate the Mountain Island Lake Marine Commission without participation from Gaston and Lincoln County did not advance to committee hearing.

In the FY2021 budget Lake Norman Marine Commission and Lake Wylie Marine Commission were funded at \$31,000 and \$25,000 respectively. If it was reinstated, the funding for Mountain Island Lake Commission in FY2021 cost would be expected to be similar to the existing Commissions.



28.

Submitted by: Commissioner Powell

Topic: Funding for Environmental Leadership
Action Plan

Response: Assistant County Manager, Dr. Leslie Johnson will provide an update at the Board retreat.



29.

Submitted by: Commissioner Cotham

Topic: How much money does the County spend above what is mandated due to unfunded mandates?

Response: The County funds approximately \$423M due to unfunded mandates or a lack of State funding.



30.

Submitted by: Commissioner Jerrell

Topic: Restorative Justice

Response: Information will be provided for discussion during the Board Retreat.



31.

Submitted by: Commissioner Meier

Topic: I want us to explore ways of communication for what the county has accomplished, its goals, its successes, its partnerships on homelessness and other endeavors. Mecklenburg County has done so much for the people who live here and I don't think those people realize what the county exactly is responsible for.

Response: The County's Public Information Department works to promote County programs, services and results through multiple channels everyday, reaching hundreds of thousands through multiple channels. They constantly work to improve those channels, including the web, social media, the Board meetings, media relations, community relations and traditional marketing, advertising and promotion efforts.

Additional information will be presented at the retreat.



32.

Submitted by: Commissioner Meier

Topic: Information regarding the arts - how much is the County funding to the arts, and how much support did the arts received from the CARES Act?

Response:

FY2021 Operating Funding – The FY2021 Operating budget includes \$3.5M in funding for the arts.

- Studio 345 -\$350K
- ASC - Cultural Blocks Program- \$950K
- Spirit Square Maintenance -\$750K
- ASC - Operating Support Grants -\$500K
- Cain Center for the Arts Capital Contribution - \$1M

CARES Act Funding - There is \$1M for the Arts Foundation of Carolinas. In addition to the County funding, the City also provided \$1M, and the private sector also donated \$1M.

Capital Projects – In addition to the programs noted above, 1% of the budget for eligible capital projects is dedicated to public art installations at new facilities.